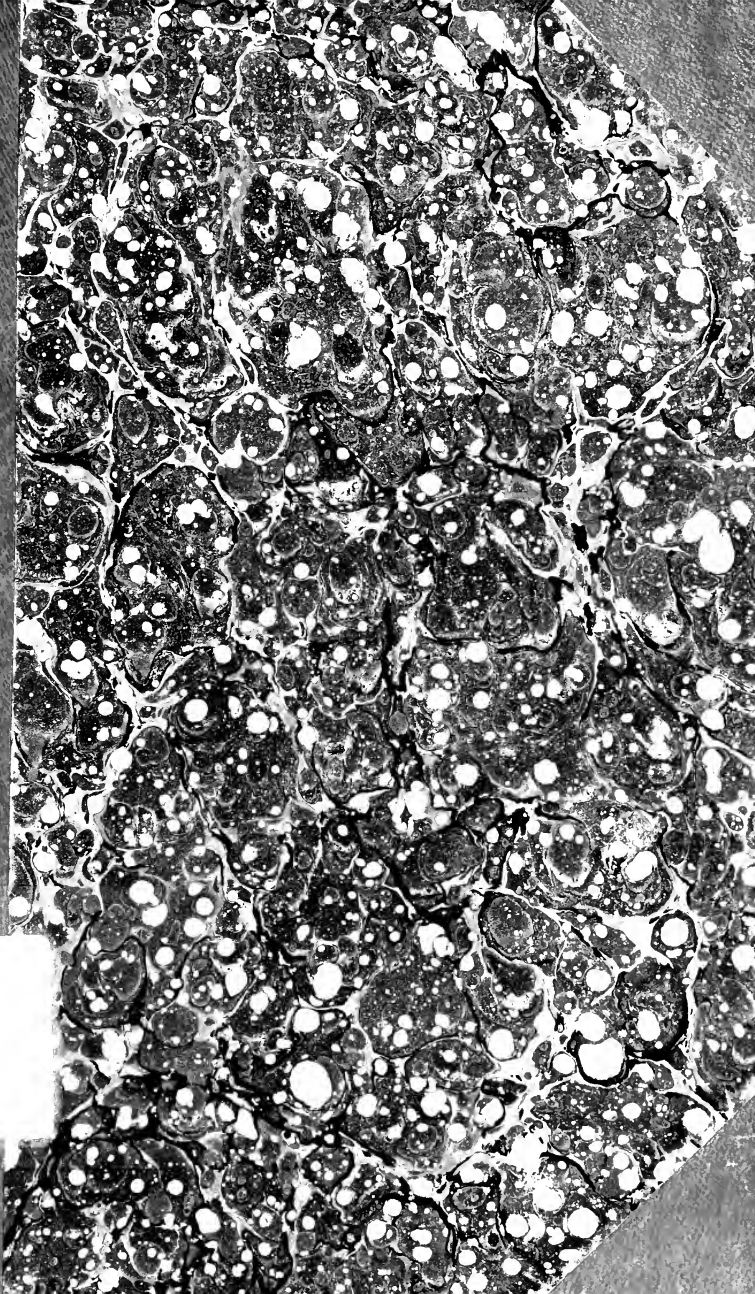


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THE ORIGIN
OF THE
HEBREW RELIGION.

AN INQUIRY AND AN ARGUMENT.

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THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

Argument of the Tract.

WHAT rational explanation can be given of the Religion of Ancient Israel? Characteristic features of the religion of the Old Testament Scriptures. 1. Alliance of RELIGION with HISTORY. 2. Organic UNITY. 3. DEVELOPMENT. Critical objections. Evidence against authenticity of the books, *negative*; in favour, *positive*.

I. Bible starts not with dogma, but HISTORY. Yet its whole purpose religious: a history, not of human affairs with supernatural episodes, but of God's dealings with mankind. Peculiarity of the history: annals of *one family line*, from Adam to Christ. Distinguish between "substantial truth" and infallibility or inspiration. Literary merit of Genesis. View of human life. Faith, prayer, providence. Unique character of Hebrew national life. Contrast between Genesis and subsequent books of Moses. 1. MIRACLES. Origin of Religion. Professor Max Müller's view. Modern repugnance to miracles. Hence rejection of Mosaic authorship of Pentateuch. Science and miracle. Another form of objection. Adequate purpose of miracles recorded by Moses. 2. RELIGIOUS CEREMONIAL, including, (*a*) a Sanctuary; (*b*) Sacrifice; (*c*) Priesthood. (*a*) The Tabernacle; symbol of Divine Presence. (*b*) Priesthood; contrast with that of Egypt. (*c*) Sacrifices. Ewald's erroneous assertion. Contrast with pagan rites. Mutual connection of the religion and the history. Enormous improbability involved in hypotheses of modern destructive criticism.

II. UNITY and DEVELOPMENT. Nature of unity discoverable in Bible. Must have adequate cause. Fundamental religious idea: Being and Character of God. Creation. Man in moral relation to his Maker. Divine authority and mercy. Contrast with heathen literature. Divine attributes of 'RIGHTEOUSNESS' and 'HOLINESS.' Transference of this latter idea to God. Hebrew idea of holiness not ceremonial, but moral. Hebrew view of SIN. Human interest of Old Testament Scriptures; yet pervaded with underlying thought of man's sin and sinfulness. Hebrew terms. Conception of sin moral, not ceremonial. Central idea which gives unity to religious teaching of Old Testament. Purity. Tenderness. Needless to discuss the view which ranks the Hebrew with pagan religions, since our whole inquiry refutes it. Science is bound to study and give account of phenomena so abundant and significant. Absurdity of hypothesis that the national genius of the Hebrews produced their national religion. The crucial test. The UNIVERSAL RELIGION.

THE ORIGIN OF THE HEBREW RELIGION.

AN INQUIRY AND AN ARGUMENT.



WHAT rational explanation, satisfactory to a thoughtful and candid mind, can be given of the religion of ancient Israel, as exhibited in the Old Testament

What rational explanation can be given of the religion of ancient Israel

Scriptures? Are its existence and character explicable by the same causes which have produced the other ancient religions of the world? We may here leave out of view the question whether in fact those religions sprang simply from the working of the human mind, or had a common root in primeval revelation. Let us take them as we find them in the most ancient records. Would it be a rational theory of the religion of ancient Israel to say that it originally resembled the religions of Assyria and Egypt, Phœnicia and Greece; but that these religions were somehow arrested in their development, whereas the religion of Israel reached by gradual development that form and force which place it in such stern but splendid

Is gradual development a sufficient explanation?

What is the secret of the supposed development?

contrast with the other faiths of mankind? If so, what was the secret of this unique development? How came it to pass that a small and despised nation, destitute of philosophy and of art, whose literature outside its sacred books has left no mark on human thought, whose history was a series of failures, culminating in the most tremendous overthrow that ever crushed and broke up a people, should have succeeded, where India, China, Egypt, Greece, Rome, all failed? How is it that Judæa has produced in Christianity, which claims to be simply the perfect flower and ripe fruit of Judaism, the one religion which has both the ambition and the prospect of conquering the world, and furnishing the supreme bond of unity for the human race?

These are questions which claim the attention of the thoughtful sceptic as much as of the Christian believer. He cannot afford to put them lightly by. For doubt ceases to be "honest doubt" if it trifles with evidence. The only sceptic who merits either respect or sympathy is he whose "open eyes desire the truth."

The unique place in literature of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Whatever view we adopt of the origin or of the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures, we must admit that they hold a unique place in literature. The translation into English, by eminent scholars, of "the Sacred Books of the East," enables the English reader to compare and contrast the Hebrew Scriptures with all other sacred writings in their

structure and contents, as well as in their influence on human thought and history.

Three characteristic features may be named as deserving special consideration: the manner in which the Hebrew Scriptures connect religion with history; their organic unity, doctrinal and historical; and their progressive development of religious teaching.¹

Three characteristic features.

What do you mean, it may be asked, by speaking of *unity* and *development* in the Old Testament Scriptures? Do you mean to assume the authenticity of the several books, and that their assigned dates correspond with the real order in which they were produced? These are the very points on which 'the most advanced modern criticism' claims to have passed its sentence, and upset the faith of ages. Of course. But it will not do for modern criticism, while denying the infallibility of the Bible, to claim infallibility for its own conclusions. They too must be criticised. No doubt there are points of minute scholarship in Hebrew as in other ancient languages, where the judgment of an expert is entitled to very great respect. Yet even here, when the point is such as can be made plain to an English reader, common sense may put in a claim to a vote. But such

What is meant by unity and development in the Old Testament Scriptures?

The claims of common sense.

¹ Other characteristics are treated with consummate force and beauty in Henry Rogers' Lectures on "*The Superhuman Origin of the Bible.*"

capital questions as whether the Pentateuch was really written by Moses, or is a tissue of forgeries and fragments compiled a thousand years after his death, do not hang on such elaborate niceties. They must be weighed in bigger scales than those in which critics weigh vowel points and various readings. They turn on broad and solid considerations, as to which every thoughtful and educated English reader may qualify himself to form a competent judgment.

The account the Scriptures give of themselves.

The account these ancient documents give of themselves has at all events a presumption in its favour, until evidence be produced to prove them unauthentic or spurious. Positive evidence against them there is none, and in the nature of the case can be none, unless a rival history of equal or greater antiquity could be discovered. The arguments against their veracity and antiquity are all indirect, of the nature of objections. On the other hand, the evidence in favour of the immemorial tradition of the Hebrew nation as to their authorship is positive, and of immense value; consisting in the structure and the contents of the books themselves. Add to this the impossibility of giving any satisfactory account of them if they be forgeries.

The indirect character of counter arguments.

The candid sceptic may say, that having weighed fairly both the evidence and the objections, the latter appear to him to preponderate. But he must

not treat the evidence as non-existent. And it is a sound rule of both common sense and criticism, that when positive evidence is conclusive, even insoluble difficulties cannot overthrow it.

Two other considerations deserve to be borne in mind. First, that supposing the books of the Old Testament to be genuine, any dislocation of their real historical order (such as the conjecture that portions of the Pentateuch were written by Ezekiel or by Ezra) must altogether confuse and disguise their religious teaching. Secondly, that if these books, taken in their traditional order, exhibit a unity and progress which disappear on any other arrangement, a powerful argument will be supplied that the traditional order is the true order. If the pieces of a model fitted in one order produce a symmetrical building, and in any other arrangement a shapeless heap, no sane mind doubts which of these shows the design with which they were fashioned.

Guided by these plain principles let us examine those characteristics of the Hebrew Scriptures above indicated; viz., the VITAL CONNECTION they present between RELIGION AND HISTORY; the unity of thought, sentiment, and practical aim underlying their great variety of form; and the PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT of religious doctrine which they display,—not final, but pointing forward to a fuller unfolding.

The religious teaching confused by dislocation of the historical order.

The unity and progress of the traditional order an argument for its truth.

I.

The Bible
begins with
history.

THE Bible begins not with dogma, but with history. It says nothing of the being and attributes of God, but shows the Creator at work.

“In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.”

It says nothing of religion, but shows the ancestors of mankind created in the image of God, and placed at the outset in moral relations of obedience and responsibility to their Creator. This is its method throughout. It gives us no religious teaching apart from particular persons, places, and events. Even the law of the Ten Commandments, the most perfect summary of moral and religious duty extant before Christianity, is recorded as matter of historical fact—uttered by a Divine Voice to the assembled people of Israel, and afterwards graven on stone tablets “with the finger of God.” Yet it is impossible thoughtfully to study these writings without perceiving that their whole aim and meaning is religious. The story they tell is not that of human affairs, with a mingling of the supernatural, but of God’s dealings with men. Even those painful and revolting episodes which a historian anxious for the honour of his race would gladly have omitted, are found on this view to have their place and meaning.

Its aim is
religious.

Another peculiar feature of the early portion of

these records is, that they take the form of family annals. In Genesis iv. a fragment is given, tracing the line of primogeniture for six generations. But in chap. v. a new departure is indicated by the title "*The book of the generations of Adam*;" and the line is traced from Seth to Noah. In chap. x. we have "*The generations of the sons of Noah*," the family tree of nations. In chap. xi. "*The generations* (or genealogic record) *of Shem*," traces the line to Abraham. It has often been erroneously supposed that this is a list of eldest sons. Abraham himself, like Shem, was a younger son. Abraham's line divides in the twin sons of Isaac; but it is not till after the death of Isaac that the family records take a new start; chap. xxxvi. giving "*The generations of Esau, who is Edom*;"¹ and chap. xxxvii. introducing the history of Joseph with the words "*These are the generations of Jacob*." After this, there is no further break. The family of Jacob gradually develops into the twelve tribes which constituted the nation of the "*B'ney Israel*," Children of Israel. What makes this genealogical character of Old Testament history the more noteworthy is, that in the New Testament Scriptures

The early Scriptures are family annals.

¹ The discussions which have been raised on vers. 31, etc., do not concern us here. See, e.g., the *Speaker's Comm.* on this chapter. Supposing it can be shown that these verses were added by a later pen, this no more affects the integrity and authenticity of Genesis than our modern practice of making additions to ancient books in the form of notes affects the authority of such books.

These old genealogies the starting point of Christianity.

it is taken as the starting point of Christianity. In the first and third Gospels, the line of Abraham, Israel, Judah, David, is traced down to Him whom St. Paul calls "the second Adam." With Him the record stops, never to interest mankind further.

A continuous chain of Divine manifestation represented by Old and New Testament along a single line of human life.

Along this single line of human life, claiming to connect the life of the first human being with the times of the Roman Empire, the Hebrew Scriptures, followed by the Christian Scriptures, represent an equally continuous chain of Divine manifestation and Divine dealing as having been carried on, assuming for some fifteen centuries a national form; yet from first to last designed for the benefit of all nations of mankind.

The fact unique and inexplicable on any theory but the reality of the Divine manifestation and the substantial truth of the history.

Nothing parallel to this is to be discovered in the whole domain of human literature, or of human religion beside. It must have a meaning and an explanation. And the more deeply it is studied, the more difficult I believe it will be found to invent any explanation other than the reality of the Divine manifestation, and the substantial truth of the history. If Moses was the writer of Genesis, we can well understand how he may have been able to collect and arrange the sacred traditions of his forefathers, together with those which may have been preserved in the family of the "Priests of Midian," amongst whom he spent forty years of his long life. But if Moses' authorship be denied, and the Pentateuch supposed a compilation

of late date by various hands, its form, style, contents, and religious teaching furnish an insoluble problem.

I have spoken of "*the substantial truth* of the history," because we must not here assume any theory of inspiration or infallibility. It is quite possible to believe that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and wrote in perfect good faith, and yet to suppose that he had no means of discriminating historic fact from legendary fiction in the annals of his forefathers. He wrote (it may be argued) what he believed to be true; but criticism is to be applied to test the actual truth of his narrative.

No theory of inspiration assumed.

Take for example the account of the Creation. To some readers the employment of the word "day" appears so irreconcilable with the facts of geology as hopelessly to shut out the notion of Divine inspiration. To others, on the contrary, no less thoughtful and competent, the general agreement of that marvellously terse record with the history of life graven in the rocks, is nothing short of a miracle of knowledge, utterly beyond the reach of the unaided human mind in that remote age, or indeed in any age previous to our own.

Difficulties felt with reference to inspiration.

Again, the long term of life ascribed to the antediluvian patriarchs, and to their descendants down to Abraham (and even later), appears to some critics self-evidently fabulous. To others, the present brevity of human life, and the rapid

decay of the bodily organs, appear perplexing and mysterious; and it seems to them inherently probable that the early generations of mankind, nearer the fountain of life, possessed a far larger share of vital power, involving a capacity no longer possessed of renewing tissues and organs during many centuries.

A paradoxical opinion, that the early narratives of Genesis are Divinely inspired myths.

The paradoxical opinion has even been maintained, with great ability and with undoubted sincerity, that the early narratives of Genesis are mythical legends, but are nevertheless divinely inspired. To those who bow with unreserved faith to the teaching of our Lord and His apostles, the testimony of the New Testament to the historical truth of those narratives, seems sufficient and decisive. But at whatever judgment the reader arrives on these and the like points (or even if he holds his judgment in suspense), the religious teaching of Genesis—the general view of Divine manifestation to man and dealing with man—abides the same, and demands to be considered and accounted for.

The religious teaching of Genesis unaffected by the judgment formed on such points.

The wonderful simplicity and terseness of the Book of Genesis probably conceal from the multitude of readers its transcendent literary merit. The story of Joseph is perhaps the finest example of narrative in literature; while the speech of Judah is an unsurpassed model of natural eloquence. The story of the mission of Abraham's servant to

Mesopotamia is equally perfect in its way ; but its fulness of detail—the *scale* of the narrative—has no parallel in Scripture. Had the Bible narratives in general been given on a similar scale of detail, the bulk of the Scriptures would have been increased manifold.

The feature of Old Testament religion we have been considering, is not peculiar to Genesis or to the Pentateuch. It pervades the Hebrew Scriptures. It is not that *History is made the medium of religious instruction*. That would be a most narrow and mistaken view of the matter. It is that Religion is shown as the soul of history ; the supreme reality and central power in human affairs ; the deepest foundation of human life. But while this key-note rings loud and clear throughout the Bible, it is struck in Genesis with unsurpassed boldness and truth. God is shown as the ultimate source of all being, preparing the earth from the beginning to be the home of man. Man's very existence is traced to God's purpose to realize His own likeness in human nature. Man is shown as conversant with God, as soon as he began to know himself and the world around him. The foundations of marriage, property, labour, moral duty and responsibility, are all laid in God's revealed will, and man's conscious relation to his Maker. Moral evil, or sin, is represented as wilful disobedience to the

Religion
the soul of
the history
in the
Hebrew
Scriptures.

Specially so
in the
Book of
Genesis.

God's
relation to
the earth,
man,
society,
moral evil.

known will of God. The tendency to evil is shown to be hereditary as well as personal; and teeming with seeds of increase. Human life is regarded as a whole; and God is seen as the Ruler and Judge of Mankind, as well as the personal Friend and Saviour of every one who fears and trusts Him. FAITH, as the mainspring and sheet anchor of the religious life; PRAYER, as direct personal converse with the Unseen Father of spirits, and as actually heard and answered by Him; and PROVIDENCE, as regulating all human affairs from the greatest to the least, are so exemplified in these ancient Hebrew annals, that the story of Abraham, of Jacob, of Joseph, possesses an undecaying charm for Christian minds of the highest spiritual culture. They are typical for all time. No example of after ages has been able to cast them into the shade.

Human
life as a
whole.

Faith.

Prayer.

Providence.

No break of
continuity
in the
Pentateuch.

The story
of the
deliverance.

The "Pentateuch" is so called because, from time immemorial, perhaps by the author himself, it has been divided into five sections or "books." But there is no break of continuity. The narrative passes briefly over the centuries, at first of peaceful prosperity, then of bitter adversity, during which Israel's descendants "increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty." It hastens to tell the story of the deliverance from bondage, and of the creation of an organised nation out of the twelve clans which claimed Joseph and

his brothers as their ancestors. But it links on this history with the story of Joseph, by his remarkable bequest concerning his embalmed remains; which bequest we are assured was reverently obeyed on the departure of Israel from Egypt, and finally carried out after more than forty years in the Promised Land (Ex. xiii. 19; Josh. xxiv. 32).

Linked with the history of Joseph.

With the narrative of the Exodus, the forty years in the wilderness, and the conquest of Canaan, is interwoven the record of the National Code and Constitution, political, religious, moral, and social. The historic reality of the Divine manifestation to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, is assumed as the necessary starting-point of God's dealings with their descendants. His promise to Abraham is treated as a 'covenant,' to which Divine faithfulness stands irrevocably pledged. But a new starting point is given immediately after the deliverance, by a fresh 'covenant' granted by Jehovah, and freely accepted by the people.

The National Code and Constitution.

The Divine manifestation to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the starting point of God's dealings with their descendants.

A fresh covenant.

“Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. . . And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and

laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD." (EX. xix. 3-8.)

Such a record has no parallel, in fact or fiction. Many law-givers have claimed Divine authority. Many sacred books have been accounted Divinely inspired. Many nations have deemed themselves patronised by a national deity, and favourites of heaven. But this description of the founding of a nation, and laying the basis of national legislation, by a solemn contract of sovereignty and obedience between the Almighty Creator and the representatives of the whole nation, is absolutely unique in its sober majesty, severe literal reality, and moral grandeur.

The description of the founding of the nation absolutely unique.

The whole fabric of national life rested on this Divinely laid basis.

On the basis thus laid, the whole fabric of legislation and framework of national life, according to the books of Moses, rested. All the subsequent history proceeds from this starting point. The religion of personal faith, prayer, and obedience, depicted in Genesis, is never lost sight of; but it is overshadowed by the religion of national faith, public worship, and obedience to the law binding on the nation. The Ten Commandments, and the subsequent laws given by Moses, are expressed in such a form that the word "Thou" may apply equally to the individual Israelite or to the nation. Divine providence and government are illustrated on a corresponding scale. The wanderings of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the sufferings and glory of Joseph, illustrate God's care and control of PERSONAL history down to its least details. Egypt, the Red Sea, Sinai, the desert, the manna, the water from the rock, the pillar of cloud and fire, teach a like lesson in regard to NATIONAL history, on a scale never equalled, never to be repeated.

The religious teaching of the remaining four books of Moses stands therefore in vivid contrast with that of Genesis, especially in two of their most striking features: a stupendous series of MIRACLES, and an elaborate RELIGIOUS CEREMONIAL involving a hereditary priesthood.

1. Two unparalleled MIRACLES are recorded in Genesis: the Deluge, and the Destruction of Sodom and its neighbour cities. These excepted, miracles occupy no prominent place, save in the form of those Divine communications, by voices, visions, angelic apparitions, and the like, which were indispensable in the absence of any written revelation, if man was to converse with his Maker, and learn His will.

The two great miracles in Genesis.

The origin, not simply of the Hebrew religion, but of religion itself, as a prominent fact of human nature and history, has been debated as a riddle yet needing solution. The Bible account of the ORIGIN OF RELIGION is that man began his journey on this globe not as a deserted orphan, turned

The origin of religion.

The Bible account.

adrift to seek God as best he could, but in communion with the Father of spirits. God talked with him, and he could talk with God. God marked for him the path of duty, and it lay in his choice to walk in it, or to wander from it. If men ceased to know God, it was by their own neglect and sin; because, as St. Paul says—"They refused to have God in their knowledge."¹

This view of a primeval revelation is strongly combated, even by writers who hold that religion is natural and indispensable to man. Professor Max Müller, in his extremely able and fascinating Lectures on the Origin and Science of Religion, speaks even with contempt of the belief that religion originated in Divine revelation. It is, he argues, an absurdity.

According to Max Müller, the concept of the Divine must come before Divinity can be predicated of this or that.

"When man has once arrived at a stage of thought when he can call anything, be it one or many, God, he has achieved more than half his journey. He has found the predicate God, and he has henceforth to look for the subjects only to which that predicate is truly applicable. What we want to know is, how man first arrived at the concept of the divine, and out of what elements he framed it; afterwards only comes the question, how he was able to predicate the divine of this or that, of the one or of the many."²

By parity of reasoning it ought to be impossible for a child to know its mother until it has "found the predicate," or "framed the concept," 'Mother.'

¹ Rom. i. 28, R.V.

² *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, page 642. Ed. 1882.

Afterwards only ought to come the question to whom that predicate is applicable, and whether he has many mothers or only one. The fact, as everybody knows, is the other way. A predicate implies language. A concept implies power to abstract and generalize: it is a *generalized judgment*, or group or series of judgments, applicable in virtue of a common name to several objects. None but a mother fully knows all that the predicate or concept "mother" stands for. But long before the cradled child can perform any such intellectual feats as abstraction and generalization—not only before he can talk, but before he suspects that there is such a thing as speech, he is perfectly conscious of his mother's presence and love. Feeling awakes while reason yet slumbers, and opens the door to knowledge. The infant born blind, to whom its mother is an invisible presence, acquires the same emotions, the same certainty, through the sensations of hearing and touch. The nascent intelligence instinctively penetrates behind the veil of sensation into the world of spirit.

Contrary to analogy.

Precisely similar, according to the account in Genesis, was the method by which the Eternal Father of spirits revealed Himself to His newborn offspring. We are neither warranted nor forbidden by any express statement to assume any visible manifestation of Divine glory to our first parents. They "heard the voice of the Lord

The accordance of the account in Genesis with human experience.

Thought
and speech.

God." They were sensible of an awful, commanding but loving and protecting Presence. They conversed with their Maker. Thought and speech are represented as already called into exercise, in the naming of the lower creatures, before man found "a help meet for him,"—a companion spirit akin to himself. It is reasonable to think that the current of intellectual, moral, and spiritual life, as well as physical, flowed strong, so near to the fountain head. The task of acquiring language, which toilsomely occupies two or three years or more of infancy, may have been condensed into a few weeks, days, or hours. Our parents could already understand the language of command, promise, and warning, when they were placed under law, and their welfare made dependent on their obedience.

The
acquisition
of language.

The Bible
account
of man.

Compared with recent hypotheses of the slow and painful ascent of man from irrational, speechless, lawless, godless apethood, the Bible account has at all events the advantage of dignity, beauty, intelligibility, and analogy with the known facts of human experience.

The two tremendous miracles of destruction which are repeatedly referred to in the New Testament as typical examples of Divine judgment on sin—the Deluge, and the overthrow of the Cities of the Plain—stand out in awful and vivid contrast with the general tenour of the narrative

in Genesis. These excepted, the miracles of the Deliverance from Egypt, and of the Wilderness, are as unprecedented in their colossal greatness as they are unique in character. Modern criticism finds in these miracles unquestionable proof of what it terms the "unhistorical" character of the narrative. Repugnance to miracles is a marked feature of our age, though by no means peculiar to it. The so-called scientific argument against miracles is in substance that invented by David Hume in the last century.¹ Stripped of ingenious rhetoric it amounts to this: Miracles are incredible because they are impossible; they are impossible because they have never been known to happen; and the proof that they have never been known to happen is, that they are incredible and impossible. Any experience, therefore, which affirms that they have actually been witnessed must be false. Thus barely stated, this celebrated argument makes but a poor show of either science or logic.

The miracles of the Exodus and the Wilderness.

The scientific argument against miracles in substance identical with Hume's.

¹ Professor Huxley has clearly and candidly pointed out the error of Hume's argument ("*Hume*," p. 133). But he misses the mark altogether when he tries to illustrate the incredibility of miracles from the supposed alleged occurrence of some isolated incredible phenomenon, such as the apparition of a live centaur. The miracles of Scripture are not isolated occurrences. Their evidence consists in their *setting*, their vital place in the history, and the impossibility of really explaining the history without them. If a race of centaurs had left their bones in the rocks, we should be compelled to believe in their existence; and the miracles of the Pentateuch and of the Gospels have left stronger witnesses than fossil bones—living results.

Huxley on Hume.

The necessity of scepticism to deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

Hence the sceptic is forced to maintain that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses. Because, setting aside not only inspiration but even honesty, if the great Lawgiver simply possessed ordinary common-sense, it is incredible that he should have based his whole legislation on imaginary prodigies, and appealed to the whole nation to testify to the truth of accounts which every man, woman, and child knew to be fables. If then Moses really wrote the Pentateuch, the miracles recorded in Exodus and Deuteronomy must really have taken place. They are facts of which science is as much bound to take account, as of any other facts in human experience.

The effect of intense culture of science.

That the intense culture of science begets in many minds a disposition to scepticism regarding miracles (or even scepticism of a wider range) is neither a stain upon science nor an argument for unbelief. It is simply an example of the infirmity of human intellect. Absorbing devotion to any branch of study always involves the peril of getting the intellect cramped in one attitude, the mental vision stunted to one focus. Pre-occupied with the grand ideas of immutable law, and of the unchanging order of nature, the student of science is apt to forget that in every experiment by which he interrogates nature, every word he utters, every movement of his limbs and fingers, he is a living example of the power of personal will to control

nature without interrupting the uniformity of law. A miracle is simply an exercise of the Divine will to produce a special result. It is absurd to suppose the Creator devoid of that power which is put forth by every child who flings a stone into the air, hits a mark with an arrow, or in any other way subjects matter and force to his will. It is ridiculous to assert that the Almighty Maker has so tied His own hands with the laws of His own universe, that He cannot do what He sees wise and good to do.

What a miracle is.

“Miracles,” the sceptic may rejoin, “are not abstractly impossible, but it is incredible that the Creator would ever derange the grand and solid order of His universe for the purpose of astonishing or converting a few thousands of half-barbarous Hebrews, the rest of the world meanwhile remaining ignorant of the alleged miracles.” The argument is thus removed from scientific ground, where it has no real standing, to the moral, which is doubtless its proper field. Calmly examined in this light, the objection against the miracles of the Pentateuch is transformed into a powerful argument in their favour. For supposing that the special exercise of Divine power which we term miracle is credible, provided the end to be answered is of adequate importance, let the reader consider whether any end could be more worthy than to impress the mind of a whole nation

Sceptical rejoinder.

Really an argument in favour of miracles.

The lessons designed to be taught by miracles.

with an indelible force which no lapse of time could weaken, the lesson of the omnipotence, wisdom, goodness, and power of the Creator, and the vanity of whatever else is called God; to inspire their faith, attract their love, awe them into implicit obedience, and prepare their minds to receive the Divine law as the basis of personal, social, and national life? Especially if this nation traced back its origin to ancestors to whom special Divine manifestations had been made, and promises given regarding their remote posterity; and was designed in fulfilment of those promises to keep alive the light of sacred tradition, and to furnish in the fulness of time the teachers of the whole Human Race.

In no other way could the Hebrews have learned them.

In what other way is it conceivable that these lessons could have been effectually taught to the Hebrews? True, the immense majority of mankind were ignorant, and even down to the present day, are ignorant both of the miracles and of the lessons. But this is but one example of a law which governs all human progress. Truth, like light, radiates from fixed centres. Great discoveries destined in the long run to revolutionize human life and history, are at first the possession of a few, or of a single mind. As matter of historic fact, an unbroken living chain of religious faith, teaching, sympathy, prayer, and practice, connects the tent of Abraham and the legislation of Sinai, through

the life and teaching of JESUS, with the religious life of modern Christendom, and with the moral power (the only one yet discovered) which has shown itself capable in the Sandwich Islands, in Polynesia, in New Guinea, in Madagascar, in South and Central Africa, of lifting half-barbarous or wholly savage and brutal tribes into civilization, morality, and liberty.

2. The second strong contrast between the religious teaching of Genesis and those of the later books of Moses, is presented by the ELABORATE RELIGIOUS CEREMONIAL ordained by the Mosaic law. The leading elements of this system were three: a sanctuary or consecrated centre of worship; sacrifices, most accurately discriminated and classified, and an hereditary priesthood.

The Mosaic ceremonial.

The Tabernacle, or "Tent of the Testimony," which accompanied the march of Israel, taken down when the host moved, and set up where they halted, taught the great principle (a lesson likewise taught at the Burning Bush, and at Sinai) that sanctity is not inherent in any consecrated spot, but depends on the Divine Presence, to be expected and bestowed wherever the people of God are assembled. What the Tabernacle was to the Camp, the Temple afterwards was to the Land and to the Holy City.

The Tabernacle.

The principal idea symbolised in the Tabernacle was evidently that of DIVINE PRESENCE—Jehovah

Its significance.

Worship and
sacrifice
secondary
to the idea
of the
Divine
Presence.

dwelling in the midst of Israel. The ideas of worship and sacrifice were secondary, dependent on this. The pillar of cloud and of fire was the visible miraculous witness that this Divine Presence was a reality. The people were to consider themselves a nation of priests. Sanitary regulations, military order in camp or on march, political assemblies, personal behaviour, as well as religious worship, all were to be ruled by this sublime idea—the presence of the Divine King with His chosen people.¹

An hereditary
Priesthood.

An hereditary priesthood was familiar to the Israelites as an Egyptian institution. But whereas the priests of Egypt were a territorial caste, over whose lands the State had no control (Gen. xlvii. 22, 26), the law of Moses enacted that the tribe of Levi should not share in the division of the land of Canaan, excepting a number of allotted

¹ *E.g.*, Ex. xxv. 8 ; xxix. 42-46 ; xxxiii. 15, 16 ; Lev. xxvi. 12 ; Deut. xxiii. 14. Our English translators have not been careful to preserve the distinction between the two Hebrew words applied to the tabernacle ; *mishkan*, habitation, and *ohel*, tent. The term *Shekinah*, used in later Hebrew for the manifestation of the Divine glory, is connected with the first word (cf. John i. 14). The two are distinguished in Ex. xl. 18, 19. The habitation or tabernacle proper was the structure of gilded boards, with its hangings of woven work. The tent of goat's hair (Ex. xxvi. 7) was spread over this inner structure. The covering (*mikseh*) of leather and sealskin (see *Speaker's Comm.* on Ex. xxv. 5, for this rendering) seems to have been a light strong waterproof over-roof, to throw off rain and snow. The same word is used of the deck or roof of Noah's ark, Gen. viii. 13.

cities, each with a narrow strip of land surrounding it. Consecrated to the service of Jehovah, they were to be sustained by the freewill offerings of the nation.

Animal sacrifices, unlike the tabernacle and the tribal priesthood, were no novelty. From the beginning they had been recognised as the appointed mode of Divine worship. The Book of Genesis contains no record of their institution; but the statement (Gen. iii. 21) that after the transgression of our first parents the Lord God clothed them with skins, has been reasonably interpreted to imply that they were commanded to sacrifice the beasts whose skins they were then instructed to prepare and wear, as symbols of the covering or pardon of sin through atonement.

Animal sacrifices.

What appears to have been novel in the sacrificial ritual established by Moses, was the elaborate distinction and classification of animal sacrifices under the three principal kinds of burnt-offering, sin-offering, and peace-offering or thank-offering. The name for the first literally means "that which goeth up," namely, in fire and smoke to heaven. The second (the name for which properly means "sin"), includes the "trespass-offering." Authorities are divided as to the meaning of the name of the third class—"peace-offering," or "thank-offering"; but the general idea is the same. Ewald asserts that previous to the legislation of Sinai "the

The classification of animal sacrifices.

Ewald's assertion.

Destitute of
adequate
proof.

Ideas
symbolised
in sacrifice.

most varied forms of sacrifice had been long in operation, each with its special drift and corresponding belief.¹ But he can furnish no proof of this assertion beyond the casual intimations in Ex. x. 25 ; xviii. 12 (possibly Gen. xxxi. 54), that *some* distinctions were recognised. The sacrifices of Noah and of Job are expressly called "burnt-offerings"; and from Genesis xxii. 2 we gather that those of Abraham were of the same character. It is generally acknowledged that the most prominent idea symbolised in this kind of sacrifice is that of complete consecration to God. But the idea of atonement for sin is very plainly recognised in Job i. 5 ; xlii. 8. In like manner, the idea of atonement must not be excluded from the peace-offering, as is plain from Lev. iii. 1, 2 ; xvii. 1-14. During the sojourn in the wilderness, when the main sustenance of the Israelites was the daily manna, no beast was to be slaughtered for food without being treated as a peace-offering.²

The
sacredness
of blood.

The sacredness of blood, as representing the soul or life, was indicated in the law given to Noah (Gen. ix. 4). But the atoning value of blood is first distinctly set forth in the case of the Passover Lamb (Exodus xii.), which may be considered the prototype of the peace-offerings. Ewald truly

¹ *Antiquities of Israel*, p. 25, Solly's translation.

² Compare Deut. xii. 15, 16, for the modification of this law after they entered the Promised Land.

says: "No heathen nation had such ideas about human sin and Divine grace as had the people of Israel . . . so that it was only in this nation that the blood assumed this unique and exalted significance, and only there that it became the centre of the whole sacrificial procedure."

Among heathen nations, as in the poems of Homer, we find the custom of offering to the gods a portion of the flesh and a libation of the wine at banquets. At first sight this seems closely to resemble the thank-offering or peace-offering of Hebrew worship. But on reflection we discover a wide and important difference between sacrificing a part of the feast and feasting on a sacrifice. In the one case, the gods were invoked as guests at the banquet; in the other, God Himself is regarded as bidding His children to His table. Thus, of the seventy chiefs who with Moses, Aaron, and two of Aaron's sons, were admitted to the feast of the peace-offerings in Sinai, on the ratification of the covenant, and to a vision of the Divine glory, we read, "They saw God, and did eat and drink." (Exodus xxiv. 5-11.)

Heathen custom.

Resemblance to the thank-offering of Hebrew worship.

Difference.

The connection between Religion and History, noticed above as the first great distinctive character of the religion of the Old Testament Scriptures, is strongly marked with regard to these three essential elements of the system set up by Moses: the Tabernacle the Priesthood, the Sacrificial Ritual.

The connection between Religion and History strongly marked with regard to the Tabernacle, Priesthood, and Sacrificial Ritual of Moses.

All three, in the records which have come down to us, are inseparably interwoven with the main facts of Hebrew story,—the deliverance from Egypt, the encampment at Sinai, the covenant between Jehovah and His people, the giving of the Law, the stubborn rebelliousness of Israel, and the consequent delay of their entrance into Canaan until the death of Moses in the fortieth year from the Exodus. You cannot explain the religion apart from the history, nor the history apart from the religion. Criticism may, in the judgment of the critics, pull the whole fabric to pieces; but it is powerless to supply anything even reasonably probable in its place.

A great deal has been made (in the interest of this destructive criticism) of the alleged inconsistency between the provision in Deuteronomy (chap. xii.) for a single sanctuary in the land of Canaan, and the record in the subsequent history of altars set up and sacrifices offered at various centres of worship: as by the people at Bochim; by Gideon at Ophrah; by Manoah at Zorah; by Samuel at Ramah, Gilgal, Bethlehem; by David on Moriah; by Elijah on Carmel.¹

The discrepancy, if there be one, belongs to Deuteronomy itself, which commands the offering of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings on an altar

¹ Judg. ii. 5; vi. 24; xiii. 16; 1 Sam. vii. 17: x. 8; xvi. 2; 2 Sam. xxiv. 25; 1 Kings xviii. 30.

The religion and history apart from each other inexplicable.

The single sanctuary enjoined, and the many altars actually set up.

of stone on Mount Ebal. It is true that when this command was carried out by Joshua, the tabernacle was probably set up at Shechem (Josh. viii. 30-35); but the sacrifices were offered, not on the brazen altar, but on the separate altar on Mount Ebal. The fact is, that all these cases are covered by the promise connected with the original law regarding altars (Ex. xx. 24-26): "In all places where I record My name, I will come to thee, and I will bless thee." Sacred associations naturally gathered round any spot where the tabernacle stood for a considerable space of time. Unity of national worship was not endangered by the building of an altar on any special occasion by a recognised representative of Divine authority, like Samuel or Elijah. What would endanger it was the practice of private unauthorised sacrifices, such as those condemned in 1 Kings iii. 2; xxii. 43; 2 Kings xii. 3.¹

The original law regarding altars covers all the cases.

The real danger to unity of national worship.

As the recorded history of ancient Israel furnishes the only key to the religion of the Old Testament, otherwise inexplicable, so the religion

The history the only key to the religion.

¹ When Solomon sacrificed at Gibeon, the Tabernacle was still there, though the Ark had been brought to Jerusalem (1 Chron. iv. ; xvi. 37-40; 2 Chron. i. 3-6). It is doubtful whether the Tabernacle was for a time set up at Bethel; see Judg. xx. After its removal from Shiloh, we find it at Nob and Mizpeh; but these are probably the same; and Gibeon was so near, that possibly only one sacred place is referred to under all three names. See *Tent Work*, ii. 105, 116-120. Conder's *Handbook to Bible*, pp. 275-277.

The testimony of the religion to the history.

bears witness to the history. Solomon's Temple pre-supposes the Tabernacle. It actually contained the Ark. But the Ark and the Tabernacle pre-suppose the wandering in the Wilderness; which in its turn pre-supposes Sinai and the Deliverance. The whole history from the birth of Samuel attests the importance of both the Ark and the Tabernacle. David's institutions, which survived the Captivity and lasted into the Christian era, attest the national importance and numerical strength of the tribe of Levi; their sacred character; and the hereditary priesthood of the descendants of Aaron. How can these (joined with the fact that Levi was a landless tribe) be explained apart from a legislation coeval with the existence of the nation? In a word, is it rationally conceivable that a nation so numerous, compact, tenacious of tradition, yet sturdily independent, prone to strife, and obstinately addicted to forbidden rites, should have been persuaded (before, during, or after the reigns of David and Solomon) to receive a body of new institutions, forged laws, and fictitious public annals, and that this astonishing fabrication, unparalleled in all literature, should have gained that prodigious hold on national belief and reverence which the writings ascribed to Moses undeniably possessed after the return from Babylon?

Any other date for the Mosaic legislation than the origin of the nation inconceivable.

The demands of scepticism on our faith greater than the miracles of the Bible.

The demands made on our faith by modern sceptical criticism far exceed in fact those made

by all the miracles of the Bible. Because in the latter case, apparent physical impossibilities find an adequate explanation,—to wit, in the exercise of Divine power for worthy ends; whereas, in the former case, moral impossibilities are presented for our belief with no explanation at all.

There is an adequate explanation of the miracles.

II.

THE intimate blending of history and religion, which we have noted as the first great characteristic of the Hebrew Scriptures, is the condition of the two other characteristics also indicated: UNITY and DEVELOPMENT. These may be best considered not separately but together. For development implies unity. And the unity discoverable in the Bible is a unity of growth; not formal and mechanical, but vital, internal, spiritual.

Unity and development.

The nature of the unity.

Clearly, if the books of the Old Testament possess any real unity, it must be of this nature. For they do not compose *a Book* in any ordinary sense of the word. They are a library, a literature. They range over a thousand years. Their writers differ widely in character, genius, education, position. They reflect the most opposite phases of national life. Diversity of contents and variety of form could scarcely be more strongly exemplified than in this collection of annals, laws, biography, poems, aphorisms, prophetic oracles. If the unity

of these sacred writings were merely artificial and conventional, conferred by authority and custom, it would dissolve at the touch of serious examination. If, on the contrary, deep below this diversified and broken surface we find a unity of thought, an unbroken vein of religious teaching, growing richer from age to age, then this unity is a fact more important than the diversity. It must have an adequate cause. It demands an intelligent explanation. If natural causes cannot explain it, we must infer supernatural. If human authors could not (or manifestly did not) combine to produce it, the only possible explanation is Divine Authorship.¹

The unity must have an adequate cause.

Does such unity, progressively unfolding itself, actually characterise the Hebrew sacred writings? To answer this question, let us take first the fundamental idea of all religion,—the BEING AND CHARACTER OF GOD. The Book of Genesis opens with affirming the deepest relation we and all other beings sustain to God as our Creator. Metaphysical questions as to self-existence, eternity, infinity, space, and time, the nature of matter and of mind, are never raised. Yet in fact they all lie wrapt up in the plain historical statement that “in the beginning, God created the heaven and the

The being and character of God according to the opening of the Book of Genesis.

¹ For a powerful exhibition of some aspects of this great subject, see Henry Rogers' *Lectures on the Superhuman Origin of the Bible*, pp. 152-181.

earth." Creation appears in the record as an orderly process, crowned with the birth of man. Its successive stages—the hidden stirring of life under the dark waters, the dawn of light, the formation of an atmosphere, the upheaval of islands and continents, the growth of plant life, the appearance in the clear sky of sun, moon, and stars, the appearance on the stage of life of fishes and other marine animals, reptiles, birds, mammals, last of all man—display a wonderful agreement with the latest discoveries of human science. But a height is reached of which science knows nothing, in the account of the Creator's beneficent delight in His work (Gen. i. 31); and in the assertion of a Divine type and purpose in man, the lord of creation (v. 26-28).

Creation a process crowned with the birth of man.

Man is represented as from the first placed in direct moral relations with his Maker. A specially prepared home, work, the Sabbath, marriage, and a positive command, the test of obedience, bless and fence his life. Disobedience is represented as putting him (as it needs must) in a sadly altered relation to God. He is called to account, found guilty, sentenced to the loss of Eden, made subject to death. No explanation is given of that awful word. If bodily dissolution, simple *animal death* be meant, then it is evident that execution of the penalty—"in the day that thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die"—was deferred. If the history

Man placed in direct moral relations with his Maker.

means us to understand that it was rigorously carried out, then evidently something else is meant than animal death, howsoever closely connected with it. Nevertheless, man retains his highest privilege,—direct converse with his Maker. Not to repeat here what has already been said concerning sacrifice, we see God reasoning with Cain, when his mind is dull with discontent and murderous jealousy, seeking to win him to repentance, and cheering him, as Adam and Eve were cheered after their transgression, with words of grace and promise (Gen. iv. 6, 7).

These representations of God and man unparalleled in Pagan literature.

Parallels in the Hebrew Scriptures.

We shall search in vain the sacred books and the entire literature of Pagan nations, for any adequate parallel to these representations of the absolute authority and just severity of the Creator, united with fatherly tenderness towards the sinner, and effort to win him to repentance, or hold him back from sin. But parallels abound throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. As examples, we may refer to the startling description of Divine sorrow over man's sin, and the hundred and twenty years' respite granted in Noah's time to the doomed world;¹ the place assigned to intercession, as of Abraham for Sodom, of Moses for Israel, of Job for his friends;² the pathetic warnings of Moses

¹ Gen. vi. 3, 5-7.

² Gen. xviii. 23-33; Ex. xxxii. 30, ff.; xxxiii. 6, 7; Job i. 5; xlii. 8.

to Israel;¹ the echo of those warnings by his successor, Joshua;² Samuel's faithful and solemn rebuke to the National Assembly, joined with the assurance that the Lord would "not forsake His people, for His great name's sake;"³ Isaiah's call to come and reason together with God, joined with a gracious promise of pardon to the penitent;⁴ Jeremiah's thunderbolts of terror, flashing and pealing through a tempest of tears;⁵ Ezekiel's trumpet blast of warning;⁶ the homely remonstrance and final warning of the latest of the prophets.⁷ The list might be indefinitely extended. The preaching of John the Baptist, the last prophet of the Old Testament, sounded afresh the key note which thus rings through the Hebrew Bible. Its full-toned harmony is heard in the preaching of Jesus: in His invitation to the "labouring and heavy-laden;" His picture of the prodigal returning to his father; His lament over impenitent Jerusalem.

From these specimens it is clear that a consistent strain of teaching, in the form not of dogma but of historic narrative and practical appeal, pervades the books of the Old Testament. Human life is everywhere regarded in direct moral relation to Divine law, authority, and mercy. The appeal is

A consistent strain of teaching pervades the Old Testament.

¹ *E.g.* Deut. viii. 30.

² Josh. xxiv. 14-25.

³ 1 Sam. xii. 7-25.

⁴ Isa. i. 18

⁵ Jer. ii. 2-13; iv. 1-9; v. 9-31; ix. 1-24.

⁶ Ezek. xxxiii. 7-20.

⁷ Mal. i. 6-11; iv. 1.

sometimes chiefly to the nation, sometimes to individuals. But in both cases one fact is to be noted, unaccountable (I think) on the supposition that we have here no Divine message, but simply men seeking to instruct their fellows. The aim throughout is not to inform and convince the intellect, but to affect and control the affections, conscience, and conduct.

Two words describing the Divine character.

The portraiture of the Divine character thus progressively set forth, must be further studied (if we desire any clear view of it) in two words of very frequent recurrence and high significance,—‘righteous’ (or ‘just’) and ‘holy.’ The words intimately connected with these must of course be included. The intuitive belief in the justice of God as “Judge of all the earth” is the foundation of Abraham’s plea for Sodom. A sense of justice and a keen hot resentment against injustice spring up so soon in the breasts of children, that we are sure human language very early contained words to denote these feelings. As soon as men formed any notion of moral goodness, human or divine, the attribute of righteousness must inevitably have entered into it.

Righteousness.

Holiness.

‘Holiness’ is a more difficult, more advanced idea. It does not naturally spring up in a child’s mind. The words expressing it do not occur in Genesis, excepting in the statement that God blessed and sanctified—hallowed or made holy—the

seventh day. This excepted, the notion of holiness meets us first in the command to Moses to strip off his sandals, because he was standing on "holy ground" (Ex. iii. 5). The spot was consecrated by the Divine Presence. The original meaning of this group of words seems to have been *separation, q.d., to God's service: consecration*. A difficulty obviously arises, in the transference of such words to God Himself. What is really meant by the command "Be ye holy, for I AM HOLY?" The reply must be sought not in logic but in feeling. Moral ideas enter the intellect through the emotions. Reverence, awe, rigorously pure worship, imply corresponding qualities in Him to whom they are due. The stronger the emotions, the more vivid the idea. The faultless purity, rigid separation, absolute surrender, mysterious reverence, with which the Mosaic law invested every thing or person consecrated to God, trained the worshipper's feelings regarding God; and these feelings gave birth to ideas in their own likeness. God's own innate holiness came to be recognized as the fountain, from which the holiness belonging to things, persons, actions, times, places, streamed forth. Hence the central idea of holiness in the Old Testament is essentially moral or spiritual. To suppose it ceremonial because largely taught by ceremonies, is a shallow but fatal error. The smallest amount of intelligent reflection must have

Their original meaning.

The real meaning must be sought in the feelings.

The central idea of holiness in the Old Testament essentially moral or spiritual.

Ceremonial, ritual holiness could not belong to God.

taught the Hebrew worshipper that ceremonial, ritual holiness could not belong to God. God's holiness could mean nothing less than that nature and character which make Him supremely worthy of worship and love; what in modern phrase we express by 'supreme moral excellence,' or 'spiritual perfection.'

The importance of the fact in relation to the origin of the Hebrew religion.

The importance of this fact in regard to our inquiry into the origin of the Hebrew religion cannot be exaggerated. It lies at the very heart of that religion. No explanation is worth looking at which does not account for it. The evidence of its reality must be sought in careful study, not only of the books of Moses, but of the commentary supplied by later writings—especially the Psalms, Proverbs, and prophetic books—on the view of Divine holiness actually held and taught by the religious authorities of the nation. It pertains, however, to the very outset of such study to bear in mind that the Ten Commandments—the starting point of the whole law—are not ritual, but moral. The tenth refers purely to inward desire and will.¹ The law of the Sabbath is no exception, for abstinence from labour is not a ceremony, but as practical a thing as abstinence from theft or perjury; and the moral results of the religious observance of the Sabbath are as real and wide-reaching as those of obedience to any other commandment.

The Ten Commandments not ritual, but moral.

¹ Comp. Rom. vii. 7.

Many readers will be aware that a completely different view is maintained by critics and divines of undoubted ability and scholarship, who claim to stand in the front rank as leaders of Biblical science and of theological thought. In the movement long and strenuously carried on for the disintegration of the Bible, an important place is filled by the view that the Levitical or legal teaching and the prophetic teaching of Old Testament Scripture are independent, inconsistent, and contradictory. If David—to whom the organization of the priests and Levites, the regulations of the Temple ritual, and the very building of the Temple were owing—says that “the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,” and prays to be kept from “secret faults,” and to have “a clean heart and a right spirit”; if Solomon declares “the fear of the Lord” to consist in departing from evil, and “the knowledge of God” to be inseparable from “righteousness and judgment and equity, yea every good path”; if Isaiah and Amos speak with scorn of sacrifices and prayers offered by those “whose hands are full of blood”; if Micah asks “What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” it is maintained that the strong, clear, deep stream of teaching of which these are samples must flow from another fountain than that which teaches that “the blood of bulls and of goats,

This view disputed by scholars of eminence.

The inward moral, and spiritual views of David and others assigned to another source than the ritual teaching.

and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.”¹

The Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, denied by this school.

Of course, this school of critics denies that Moses was the author of Deuteronomy; otherwise, their view would be at once convicted of error, since none of the prophets can go beyond the simple comprehensive statements of Deuteronomy, which describe religion as essentially consisting in love, faith, and obedience.² Perhaps a sufficient refutation of the view in question is supplied by the hundred and nineteenth Psalm. This perfectly unique composition gives us the views and feelings of a pious Israelite (of what tribe, rank, or calling we have no means of guessing) concerning the Divine Law. The written Word of God, under a great variety of names (the Rabbins reckon *ten*), is here described as an ideally perfect standard of character and conduct, “righteous and very faithful,” “very pure,” and “exceeding broad”; by giving heed to which the young man may “cleanse his way,” the afflicted servant of God be quickened and comforted, the entrance of which “giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple.” “Thy righteousness,” exclaims the Psalmist, “is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is the truth.” It seems impossible to rise to a higher conception

The 119th Psalm, a refutation of this criticism.

¹ Heb. ix. 8-14.

² *E.g.* Deut. vi. 4, 5; viii. 1-3 x. 12-21; xiii. 4; xv. 7-10; xxx. 1-6, 11-15, 20.

of Divine truth, or a loftier level of spiritual temper and thought than this remarkable psalm exhibits. Is it critical acumen, or is it mere blindness, which can discern in that LAW in which the Psalmist beheld such Divine wonders, nothing but the work of priests and forgers; a melange of superstitious inventions, heathen traditions, fictitious histories, and pious frauds? ¹

One other point, the importance of which cannot be over-estimated, demands careful consideration. Over against the conceptions of Divine righteousness, holiness, and purity, the Hebrew Scriptures set that of their dark opposite—human SIN. The one cannot be understood apart from the other. No theory of the origin of the Hebrew religion merits serious attention which cannot give an honest and satisfactory reply to the question, *Whence was the idea of sin which pervades the Old Testament Scriptures derived?*

The Scripture view of sin.

Whence was it derived?

Not even the poetic and historic literature, far less the sacred books, of all other ancient nations, can stand comparison with the Hebrew Scriptures in human interest. No phase of human life is unreflected in that wondrous mirror; no note is left untouched throughout the diapason of human emotion. Every vicissitude of human fortune finds

The varied and unrivalled human interest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

¹ These are not random words, but a guarded and a moderate statement of what is implied necessarily in the theory that the laws of Moses were not given by God, and that the so-called books of Moses were forgeries of later ages.

a place in these pages, from the throne to the dungeon, from the cradle to the grave. Every type of human character is represented, from the most heroic greatness or saintliest purity to the most unbridled and revolting wickedness. A procession of empires passes across that narrow stage. We hear the jubilant songs of harvest and vintage, the music of feasts, the stern hymn of warriors, the paean of victory, the choral chant of temple worship, the wail of the dirge. Yet with this unrivalled fulness and all but endless variety of human interest, national tradition, and individual portraiture, it is no exaggeration to say that one dominant character pervades the whole delineation; one thought underlies the whole, even where it does not appear on the surface; one deep sorrowful note rings like a knell through all the music. It is that which St. Paul utters when, quoting from the Old Testament, he says that "ALL HAVE SINNED, and come short of the glory of God."¹

The underlying-
thought of
the whole.

The proof
to be dis-
covered by
attentive
study of
the Old
Testament.

For the proof that this is so, the reader must be referred to the entire body of Hebrew Scripture. He must not merely scan its letter, but labour to gauge its drift and fathom its spirit. In this attempt it is indispensable that attention be given to the terms under which this conception of sin is presented. The Hebrew language is rich in moral synonyms. Nine principal words may be noted,

¹ Rom. iii. 23.

without separately noticing the various forms in which some of them appear. Our translators have observed no certain rule in rendering them.

1. *Chattath* (*chattaah, chet*); Sin; perhaps originally 'error,' 'missing the mark.'
2. *Pesha'*: Transgression; perhaps 'breach.'
3. *Resha'*: Unrighteousness; wickedness.
4. *Asham*: Guilt; perhaps originally 'default,' the word is rendered 'trespass' in the law concerning 'trespass-offerings.'
5. *Avōn*: Perversity; crime.
6. *Aven*: Vanity; iniquity.
7. '*Evel* (*avlah*): Wickedness; depravity; properly 'twisting aside.'
8. *Ma'al*: Trespass.
9. *Ra'* (*ra'ah*): Ill; evil.¹

Terms used for presenting the conception of sin.

One fact of immense interest comes out from this list of words; namely, that the Hebrew conception of sin was moral, not ceremonial. This is as true of the Law as of the historical and prophetic writings. The reverse might have been looked for. Considering the prominence given in the ceremonial law to ideas of defilement and purification, we

The Hebrew conception of sin moral, not ceremonial.

¹ The English reader may find the occurrence of each Hebrew word in Dr. Young's *Concordance*, by looking under all the English words, "sin," "iniquity," etc.

Words for moral attributes originally metaphors.

The metaphoric sense had died out of the Hebrew words before the language took the earliest form in which we find it.

might have expected these symbolic notions to be reflected in the terms employed to express sin. Not one of these terms has any such meaning. Not only so. Although it is certain that in Hebrew as in other languages the words used for moral attributes and sentiments must have been originally metaphors taken from objects of sense, yet in none of these Hebrew words is the metaphor obvious.¹ Their etymology is rather matter of learned conjectures than of certainty. The inference is plain. These words were so anciently and so constantly used in a moral sense, that the metaphoric meaning had died out of them before the Hebrew language took the earliest form in which we find it. They had come to stand for the purely moral ideas of disobedience to law, infraction of right, and desert of blame and penalty.

The reader can therefore easily estimate the value of the assertion sometimes made as confidently as if it were a scientific discovery, that the idea of sin entertained by the ancient Hebrews was that of ceremonial defilement, to be got rid of by ceremonial purification, or of definite outward acts, to be balanced by other definite acts of atonement

¹ They contrast curiously, therefore, with a great number of English words, in some of which the metaphor lies on the surface (as *upright*, *base*, *heartless*, *close-fisted*); while in others (as *right*, *wrong*, *perverse*, *transgression*), it is transparent to any one who has a moderate knowledge of etymology. Our word '*sin*,' on the other hand, is a very ancient word, and seems to have had a moral meaning from the first.

or penalty. The Hebrew language itself bears irrefragable witness that the pollutions and purifications ordained by the ceremonial law were but symbols of a stain they could not reach and a purity they could not bestow; the pollution of the heart and conscience by inward sin, and the purification of Divine forgiveness and restoration to God's image. If the penitent exclaimed, "*Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it,*" he spoke in perfect accord with the law, which ordained for such crimes as murder and adultery, not sacrifice, but "death without mercy." And if he prayed, "*Hide Thy face from my sins; and blot out all mine iniquities; create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me;*" he but interpreted the deepest lessons of the law, which shone through its ritual as through a transparent veil: lessons which the great Law-giver himself declared that God's own voice had proclaimed in his ears. (Ex. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 6.)

The symbolical sense of ceremonial purifications.

We are thus brought back to the central conception which gives unity to the religious teaching of the whole body of the Hebrew Scriptures,—the MORAL CHARACTER OF GOD, IN PERSONAL RELATION WITH MANKIND AND WITH EACH HUMAN BEING. This great central doctrine (which includes the truths of man's personality, moral character, and accountableness) is developed by means of human history and experience,—especially the experience

The central conception of the religious teaching of the Old Testament.

Four lines
of illus-
tration.

Public
history.

Symbolism
and media-
tion.

Prophecy.

Personal
experience.

of sin. Four main lines of illustration combine to unfold this greatest of lessons. (1) Public history, especially as concerned with those calamities which the Scriptures represent as Divine judgments on sin: as the Deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the overthrow of Pharaoh, the punishment of the rebellious Israelites, the extermination of the depraved idolaters of Canaan, the Babylonish captivity, the overthrow of Babylon. (2) Symbolic worship and priestly mediation. (3) Prophetic ministry, interpreting God's law, will, truth, and promises. (4) Personal experience; vividly illustrating, on the one hand, the care and guidance of God's providence, and leading and teaching of His Spirit, bestowed on those who fear Him; on the other hand, the life of faith, penitence, prayer, and loving obedience to God. In this last method the teaching of the three other methods is brought to a practical focus. It may be summed up in the words in which the most sorrowful of the prophets, in the most mournful book of Scripture, utters his peaceful faith: "The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." (Lam. iii. 25.)

Purity of
Old Testa-
ment moral
sentiment.

One of the strongest points of contrast between the religion of the Old Testament Scriptures and heathen religions is its *purity of moral sentiment*. Paganism deifies lust. The orgies of the wine-god in Greece, the abominations of which it is a shame

even to speak practised in the temples of Babylon and Phœnicia, the priestly frauds which made it hard for Roman augurs to keep their countenance in one another's company, find no counterpart—nothing but stern condemnation—in the religion of Jehovah. Vices shamelessly practised among the cultured Greeks, and sung about by the most elegant Roman poets, were branded with infamy among the Hebrews. When these plague-spots infected Israel (as they often did) it was always in connection with idolatry; and they were denounced by the prophets as the sure precursors of national ruin. Vice and crime are no doubt described, when the purpose of the Scripture narrative requires, with antique plainness of speech shocking to our modern taste. The failings and sins of pious men are recorded with merciless candour. But never can one detect a trace of sympathy with vileness, cruelty, intemperance, or falsehood. Even those terrible denunciations of transgressors which modern readers are often at a loss to reconcile with the spirit of the Gospel, draw their severity from that intense moral indignation against wrong, in which modern sentiment is defective; and which in those rough times was a needful safeguard of moral purity.

Contrast with other religions.

Historic fidelity of the Old Testament without trace of sympathy with moral evil.

Yet the religion of the Bible is no less remarkable for its tenderness than for its severe purity. Once in five hundred or a thousand years, when morality

Tenderness of the Bible.

is on the brink of perishing among men, the sword of justice smites and spares not. Hostile criticism, blind because hostile, fixes on these rare and long-deferred examples of divine severity (always pre-faced by forbearance and warning), and overlooks the fact that the prevailing representation of the divine character places mercy, compassion, kindness, tenderness among its foremost attributes. Heathen poets have sounded the depths of human sorrow, passion, and pity; but nowhere in pagan literature, least of all in the religious books of heathendom, can we catch even the echo of that full-toned tenderness and gracious comfort which rings through the Hebrew Scriptures, assuring us that "the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." Even the lower animals are represented as largely sharing divine care and compassion. It is not a little significant, that the rainbow, that smile of the tempest in which the myths of heathendom saw only a bridge for spirits to cross, is in the book of Genesis the emblem of God's remembrance of man's frailty, and faithful promise both to mankind and to the lower creatures. "His tender mercies are over all His works."

Comfort of
the Hebrew
Scriptures.

Divine care
for mankind
and the
lower crea-
tures.

It has not seemed necessary formally to discuss the view which regards the God of the Old Testament, or of the Pentateuch, as a national Deity, and the Hebrew religion as but one among the many national religions of ancient heathendom.

If the outline here traced be just, this theory is refuted at every step, and has no standing-room. It is contradicted by the basis laid for religion in the account of Creation, in harmony with which is the constant prominence given to the claims of Jehovah as Creator of all things; by the express claim of sovereignty and ownership over all nations made in those very passages in which Israel is said to be, for certain purposes, a chosen people; ¹ by the universal views of divine providence which pervade the whole history, and are grandly summed up in Psalm cvii.; and by the world-wide promises which ring like unearthly music along the course of prophecy, from the promise to Abraham, that *in him* ALL NATIONS should be blessed, to such declarations of universal divine sovereignty, and such invitations to all nations to worship Jehovah as are contained in the Psalms.² The intense national pride and narrowness of the Jews, especially as the time drew near for their ancestral faith to take its destined form as the universal religion, afford a moral demonstration that these anticipations in the Old Testament Scriptures of the world-wide philanthropy of the New, owe their inspiration to a higher source than Semitic religiousness or Hebrew genius.

Jehovah
the God of
the whole
earth.

The
narrowness
of the Jews,
an argument
for the
Divine
origin of
their
Scriptures.

¹ *E.g.* Gen. xv. 14, 16; Ex. ix. 29; xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6-8; viii. 19, 20.

² *E.g.* Ps. xxii. 28; xxiv. 1, 2; lxvii. 2-4; xcv. 3-6; xcvi. 10; c. 1, 2.

The foregoing review, necessarily brief and condensed, appears not simply to warrant but to compel the conclusion, that when the most has been made of all the parallels and resemblances which can be collected from the sacred writings of other ancient religions, the Religion of Ancient Israel, from Abraham to Malachi and John the Baptist, stands majestically and superhumanly alone.

The conclusion from the argument.

Science herself may well be interrogated at the bar of common sense, and asked to give account of phenomena covering so vast a range of human experience, and of such surpassing grandeur and unique interest. The only explanation, apart from that embodied in the Hebrew records themselves, seems to be that the little nation of Israel, inferior in all other respects to all the great nations of antiquity, possessed a unique religious genius, by the force of which they outstripped in this one field the whole human race; and finally gave birth to the universal religion of Christ. This hypothesis will not bear serious scrutiny. In the first place, it denies the facts to be explained, and substitutes romance for philosophy. For if even the main outlines of Hebrew history are to be trusted, it was not the Nation which produced the Religion, but the Religion which produced the Nation. Secondly, it contradicts all the evidence respecting the character of the Hebrew people. The stern rebuke of their great Lawgiver: "Ye have been rebel-

Inadequate explanation refuted.

lions against the Lord from the day that I knew you" (Deut. ix. 24), is re-echoed by the whole series of prophets. Two of the lessons of the Decalogue the Jews indeed learned from the Babylonish captivity, and never afterwards forgot: hatred of idols, and reverence for the Sabbath. But their religious development as a nation during the following five centuries consisted not in the perfecting of Old Testament teaching, and the raising of public and private life to the level it required; but in substituting the Rabbi for the Prophet, and encasing religious life in the most elaborate crust of mechanical formulas men have ever invented or groaned under. When the crowning test was applied, by the appearance of Him to whom all the prophets bore witness, the religious leaders of the nation proved yet more blind than the multitude whom they cursed as ignorant of the law. They could see in JESUS neither "grace and truth," nor "the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father." They condemned the holiest, wisest, greatest, and best of Teachers as a blasphemer and traitor; and crucified their King. But in the hands of the Crucified One, the religion of the Hebrew Scriptures,—the religion of Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, John the Baptist, freed from all that was national, local, temporary, became the one possible UNIVERSAL RELIGION for mankind.

The religious development of the nation after the Babylonish captivity.

Their rejection of Christ.

What the Hebrew religion became in the hands of the Crucified.



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